My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.

THE NA WAY

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Sponsorship and Commitment

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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N.A.

N.A. is a non-profit Fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other to stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only *one* requirement for membership, the honest desire to stop using. There are no musts in N.A., but we suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that *they work*.

All members of Narcotics Anonymous are invited to participate in this "meeting in print." Send all input along with a signed copyright release form to: The N.A. Way; *World Service Office, Inc.; P.O. Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409*

THE TWELVE STEPS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. *We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction — that our lives had become unmanageable.*

2. *We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

3. *We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God* as we understood Him.

4. *We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

5. *We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

6. *We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*

7. *We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*

8. *We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*

9. *We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

10. *We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*

11. *We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God* as we understood Him, *praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and the power to carry that out.*

12. *Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

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From the Editor

The word about the special we ran last month took a little time to reach the groups, so we have been asked to extend it another month. We will do that. Through the First of August, subscriptions to the N.A. Way are going for $10.00 per year. Notice also the bulk discounts on the order form in the back of the magazine. That is ongoing, not part of the special. It is intended for committees, institutions, groups—whoever may benefit from the opportunity to use the N.A. Way to carry the message on a larger scale.

We have begun to make available large single purchases of one or more issues of the magazine for conventions at a considerable discount. If you have a convention coming up in the next few months, feel free to give us a call at the WSO to make advance arrangements. We have a large poster that we can send for you to display at the literature table or an N.A. Way booth. We are finding that this method of gaining exposure for the magazine is working. Please remember that we are currently into a subscription drive designed to put us at 3,000 subscribers by December of 1985. The future of the magazine depends upon our meeting that goal this year.

I hope you're all finding ways to keep cool this summer. It is always gratifying to be able to enjoy another clean summer with each other in the Fellowship. Judging by the number of events in this month's "Comin' Up" section, most of you share that sentiment. Have a fun July!

R.H.
Editor

What is Wrong with Our Fellowship?

I have heard fellow members asking "What is wrong with our Fellowship?" I have given this some thought, and I believe that the answer is "nothing." Not with our Fellowship. There is something wrong, but it lies within each of us as individual members.

There is a lot that is right with our local Fellowship. That it exists is one thing. We do have a Fellowship in which to seek recovery. Local addicts such as myself are no longer crying in the dark. We have a place to go to work on our recovery from the disease of addiction. We have meetings to attend—five here in town and another forty within fifty miles of here. We have an active area service committee that has been meeting monthly to serve the needs of the local groups. We have people who have been willing to serve as trusted servants at the group and area levels. Several of these members have been willing to serve in more than one position. We have a pool of literature ordered monthly from the WSO. At most of our meetings, literature is regularly available to the newcomer. Several of our members have purchased copies of our Basic Text to make them available at the meetings without tying up group or area reserves. We have a hotline that is listed, and calls are relayed to N.A. members through a 24 hour answering service. A half-dozen local members are willing to receive those calls—many at all hours. We have meeting lists that are updated periodically and distributed at our meetings. We have pleasant meeting halls for our regular groups, with storage for literature and coffee. In other words, we have a **lot** that is right with our Fellowship.

So what is wrong? Indications that something is wrong might include power struggles of one sort or another, resentments among members, relapses, a seeming lack of unity, few sponsors, disruptions at

meetings, but most of all how few newcomers return for a second look. The lack of returning newcomers, it seems to me, is the real evidence that something is wrong. Many members believe that a larger fraction of newcomers would return if "something" were different.

Still, our Fellowship is just fine—just where it should be—offering all that it can to the still suffering addict. Just as the problem lies with each of us, so does much of what is right. A lot has been done, but much more can be done. If we are going to attract the newcomer we must each reflect recovery.

The question should be "What is wrong with me?" or better yet, "What can I do to make things better? Am I working my program? Am I backsliding or am I moving forward? Do I understand the steps and traditions? Have I been open-minded about evolving formats at the meetings? Am I being of service? Have I become complacent? Do I attend the meetings regularly? Do I offer rides to the meetings? Do I clean up and dress neatly for the meetings? Am I on time, or early, or late to meetings? Do I help set up? Do I help clean up? Do I disrupt or cause distractions at meetings? Do I give the person sharing my full attention? Do I act like I care? Do I give long lectures when I share or do I keep it brief and allow others the time? Am I sharing from the heart, about my recovery today, or about long past experiences? Do I advise the newcomer, or do I accept him? Is my goal to let everyone know how well I am or is it my goal to get better? Do I have a sponsor? Am I sponsoring anyone? Am I really recovering? Today?"

When we ask what is wrong with our Fellowship, we ignore what is wrong with ourselves. We are people with addictive, self centered behavior, trying to learn to live a new way of life. A few months or years in the Fellowship does not equal recovery. Recovery is a life-long process. We are all just beginning. In a sense, we are all newcomers. A fellow member recently gave me a bumper sticker for my bathroom mirror that says, "You are looking at the problem." I submit that what is wrong for each of us can usually be found in the bathroom mirror.

M.L.
Michigan

Sponsorship and Commitment

What is a sponsor? In business it is a person who puts up money to aid another business. In walkathons it's someone who pays money for every mile you walk. But the sponsorship we have in this Fellowship has nothing to do with money. It has to do with commitment, faith, understanding, and concern for another's personal growth and welfare.

There are two sides to being a sponsor, and they both have to do with the things mentioned above. Many of us, when we were new to the program, got a sponsor so that we could tell everyone we have one. But where does that commitment come in? If we ask someone to "sponsor" us, but don't call that person, that is not commitment. The commitment, growth and understanding comes from calling that sponsor when we have problems, when we feel confused and helpless, and even when we feel good. Those phone calls help build a special bond between us and our sponsors.

The other part of sponsorship is being a sponsor and making a commitment to help another person. It is my belief that when we give advice, or say too many "you shoulds" when talking to another addict, we turn that person off. How did we react, in our active addiction, to things we were told to do. Most of us rebelled against the "you shoulds" and did the exact opposite. The best we can do to help another addict is to share our experience with the situation and the strength we gained from it, thereby giving that other person hope.

Sponsorship is one of the biggest parts of my program. Right after I had two years clean I felt miserable and thought, "is this all there is to recovery?" I'm married, have a good job, nice apartment, but there was still a void. My sponsor told me that the only way I can keep what I have is by giving it away. Now I sponsor a few girls, and it is so rewarding to work with them and see the light start shining in their eyes and the little miracles that happen in their lives. It's great to know that I can bring comfort, help, hope and compassion into someone's life instead of destroying things like I used to. I have God and this Fellowship to thank for it.

Gratefully
V.E.
California

MIDWEST RECOVERY

Two regional conventions are being held this month in the Midwest. **Iowa's Regional Convention** for N.A. features such uniquely midwestern flavor as "Camping at Henry's farm" and a hog roast. From the candlelight meeting on Friday night to the Sunday morning spirituality meeting, all the familiar N.A. convention events are scheduled to boot. It looks like a real down home event.

Freedom I is the theme for the **Central Great Lakes Regional Convention** in Midland, Michigan. Besides all the regular convention activities, fireworks on the water are planned, and R.V. parking is available for the campers. It's at the Valley Plaza in Midland, equipped with sauna and swimming pool. You bring the love, Fellowship and hugs. See the "Comin Up section for details on these and other N.A. events coming soon.

To the Spouse

As an addict recovering in Narcotics Anonymous, I have often been approached by spouses of members of our Fellowship with some concerns. Some of those concerns I have found relevant to us as members, and I would like to share a few thoughts about them here. I know that many of these family members read the N.A. Way, so I will address these thoughts to them directly.

I am very glad, as I'm sure you are, that your spouse has found recovery through the N.A. program. I also understand and can empathize with your feeling that his (I'll say "his" for simplicity, though the member may be the wife) that his involvement in N.A. seems to take away from his availability to the family. The problem is not new. Much experience of other members and their families has been passed along to us; I would like to pass some of that along to you.

Many spouses say that they have tried to become involved in the Fellowship by attending meetings and parties. We commend you for this and welcome you. You tell us, though, that you sometimes do not feel the same warm welcome that the member gets. This may be due to the fact that your spouse attends meetings on a regular basis, and has therefore developed deeper friendships with other members. Is it possible that with more time and more contact with members you could come to feel more at home with us? Could you use this experience to find common ground with other spouses of members, and begin to feel more at home with them as well?

I strongly encourage you to attend (or start a meeting of) a Twelve Step Fellowship for family members, such as Nar-Anon. First off, that would help you to better understand and accept the fact of your spouse's addiction and cope with it on a daily basis. Secondly, it would give you a Fellowship in which to become involved and establish a support system similar to that experienced by your spouse. Some have objected to that, though, saying that such mutual involvement takes them and their spouse their separate ways one more night a week. You may consider attending Nar-Anon meetings on the same night of the week your spouse attends his regular N.A. meetings if at all possible.

Some of the experience shared by other people facing this same problem was that they began to pay more attention to quality time, rather than quantity time. One member described the situation saying, "The little time we have together now is better than all the time we had together before, if we had any." The point he was making was that when the spouse is actively using, they tend to spend either no time at all with the family, or the time they do spend is of very poor quality because they are suffering in active addiction. It therefore becomes beneficial to develop an attitude of gratitude and appreciate the fact that the spouse is recovering and can participate fully in at least some family activities.

And of course the good news does not stop there. It does get better. Many addicts and spouses have shared that initially, members tend to become heavily involved in the program. It is important that new members attend quite a few meetings and participate in other ways. They may attend picnics and other functions, or become involved in general service by giving rides to other addicts; they may come early to set up tables and chairs, or any number of other activities related to Narcotics Anonymous. It may be that this is a burden on your family at this time. It is going to cause you to draw on your greatest strength—whether that strength be from God as you understand Him, the Fellowship of Nar-Anon, or another source—in order to get through this difficult time.

As the years go by, you will most likely find that your spouse's involvement will change. It may be

that he chooses to serve at different levels. We cannot say for sure exactly what your lives will be like in several years, however, we do want to encourage you and assure you that if you both honestly try to practice the Twelve Steps in your daily lives, the solutions will appear.

One final thing is that together you will grow spiritually and emotionally as you continue practicing these principles in all of your affairs. The bond developed through mutually applying these spiritual principles is undoubtedly one of the strongest ties that can bind two people together.

I wish you both the very best in your continued recovery and in your marriage. Please feel free to write to the N.A. Way with your experience on these issues. In that way you can pass along the solutions which you have discovered to these sometimes difficult situations. Many of us would be interested to know how other couples deal with this problem so we could share your experience with other addicts who may face similar situations.

G.S.
California

FLORIDA RCNA IV

Florida's Fourth Annual Regional Convention, "The Gift of Life," is being held during the 4th of July vacation. Meetings, fellowship, workshops and lots of sun are on the agenda. If you're still thinking about making some last minute plans to be there, the names and phone numbers of the contact people are listed in the "Comin' Up" section of this magazine. They tell us they're bracing for a bigger crowd than ever, with N.A. growing rapidly there as everywhere else. If you're at all close by, don't miss this one!

Step One

I had no trouble accepting the First Step when I came to N.A. I had already proven time and time again that I could not control my drug use. In fact my using controlled me, and as a result, my whole life was falling apart. I tried to quit many times, but could never make it through one day without getting stoned again. I was tired of using drugs, and wanted to quit, but I didn't know how. A part of me still craved drugs. I felt like a split personality. I was completely filled with negative emotions. I knew that I was dying, but didn't know how to stop it. I knew I was losing everything and everybody that mattered in my life, but I couldn't turn it around. I felt trapped in a prison that I had built for myself. I was my own worst enemy.

Because I made copping and using my top priority, all other areas of my life were a disaster. I was falling down on the job. I was flunking out of school. I separated myself from everyone except my dope contacts. I spent all of my money on drugs. I got traffic tickets regularly, and got arrested for drunk driving. I had become completely out of control and completely out of touch with reality. I felt like a ghost or a monster. When I looked in the mirror, my reflection looked like a snake or a rat. I had come to believe that I could never quit using drugs, and was just trying to become resigned to my fate. I felt that my life was over. I had given up hope. I felt powerless indeed.

I felt hope the first time I read the First Step. It was a relief to be able to open up to other people and say, "Yes, I have a problem. I am powerless over my addiction and my life is unmanageable. Help!" A little bit of the load was immediately lifted from my back when I came to my first N.A. meeting and realized that I didn't have to go on pretending I was all right.

I know now that it's only through the grace of God and the N.A. program that I don't have to get stoned today, nor do I even want to. I know now that my addiction includes not just drugs but people, places, and things. That covers just about everything. I can't successfully handle, control, or use anything or anybody myself. It is only through this program and my higher power that I am given the tools to live a happy and comfortable life, without depending on some external source for my happiness and serenity. Thank God for working a miracle in my life and bringing me to N.A. Thank God for the miracle of recovery that he gives me each day. Every day clean is a gift from God, to be enjoyed, not wasted. There are only blessings in my life today. I have no excuse to indulge in fear or self-pity as long as I remember these things and give the credit where it belongs. Thank you, God.

S.L.
Tennessee

Principles Before Personalities

I'm writing this letter in the hopes of getting feedback from N.A. members on an opinion of mine related to "principles before personalities" and anonymity. I don't know how others feel, but I feel very uncomfortable when I hear conversations among addicts at coffee after a meeting (or anywhere else for that matter), talking about "my Sponsee John Doe and how he's not working his program," and or quoting for amusement personal things this Sponsee said to him/her in confidence.

I feel this is a violation of anonymity. I also feel that sitting around talking about who is so and so's sponsor or Sponsee, and who's dropped who and picked up who as a sponsor, is just plain gossip! Don't you think if it's so important for you to know who John Doe's sponsor is that you should, in all sense of sound principle, ask John Doe yourself? Then maybe, if he's interested, you can explain your need to know this to John Doe yourself, as opposed to making his program and his personal life the topic of conversation over coffee.

This issue has been bothering me about this Fellowship for some time now. To tell the truth, it turns me off on the thought of getting a sponsor in my area. I see this behavior as "old ways"—immature and unhealthy. I'm sure other things can be found to be discussed over coffee.

Now I can just hear a couple of instant rebuttals from the very people who participate in this behavior:

1. "Why do you have to hide who your sponsor is or who you're sponsoring?"

2. "What if I'm having a problem or conflict with my sponsor or someone I'm sponsoring? Am I not supposed to talk about it?"

These are the main rebuttals I can imagine hearing, so I will respond. In answer to #1, no one has to hide who his or her sponsor is. It's up to each individual if they feel like telling people. My point is that there are at times sick motives for advertising this; also I feel it sometimes puts the sponsor on a pedestal (where no human being belongs). I feel many addicts use a certain person for a sponsor as a status symbol, and that's why they need to announce it to everyone. Many times the sponsor isn't even used. They're just token clean-time associations. I also feel inflated egos can develop as a result of this direct quoting of what my sponsor "Joetta Doe" said I should do, etc. As for announcing who you're sponsoring, I can see no other reason for announcing the list of names of all your Sponsees, or "Babies" etc, other than just plain ego or gossip.

In answer to #2; I personally am very successful at getting help with these issues without mentioning people's names. I feel I get a more unbiased, H.P. guided response to my question if this person's personality is not dragged into it! This way the person with whom I'm sharing does not get clouded by her personal feelings about the person I'm having conflicts with, and an atmosphere is attained which is more in keeping with "principles before personalities." The same goes for me when someone is sharing with me. I prefer not to know who the person is having a conflict with. In this way a lot of just plain recovery goes on. It works just as well to say, "I heard at a meeting..." or "I'm angry with someone on the program because..." or "my sponsor and I..."—or whatever. There's no need to drag in personalities or disclose confidentially shared things.

If you've noticed, I've capitalized Sponsee and Baby throughout this article. In my opinion these labels seem to say "this person is lower in the program than me." I capitalize them to offset that implication. I feel that no matter how much time you have in the program you're just as far away from your next high as any newcomer if you don't get humble and stay that way. I just heard a good friend of mine (who loves to use these titles) say "I went there with Joe, one of my Sponsees. Why did he have to label Joe? No ego here.

It feels good to get this off my chest. If someone sees a good side to all this name dropping, please enlighten me, because I don't see any good in it.

I feel we're all in this Fellowship for recovery, and I would like to see N.A. outgrow its reputation (not always unmerited) for being immature. I know all I can do is abstain from this behavior myself, and state my feelings in this letter, and then let go. Thanks for listening.

Love,
an addict

IMAGINE YOURSELF...

I was walking along a path and started to feel a bit uneasy, so I decided to go exploring and took a smaller pathway which was deserted. I thought I knew what was at the end of it, but as I went on my journey I realized that this path twisted and turned, and the further I went, the darker it became. There were shadows everywhere. I became scared. There was no one I could run to and no one I could talk to. I panicked and started to run; I fell down in the darkness and cried. I couldn't see any further. I couldn't go on. I was lost.

All of a sudden somebody picked me up and told me there was another way. Then you opened your arms wide to show me the way, and you pointed to guide me through the entrance. I walked slowly at first; everything was so new. Then I skipped along and the sun was shining and I was warm and I turned around to look at everything and I bumped into someone and we laughed. I sat down to rest for a while and started to wonder how I could show other people the way, and I smiled while I was thinking.

Anonymous
New Zealand

SPECIAL FEATURE

"L'Envol"

This piece requires very little introduction. Suffice it to say that the first segment below was written by a staff member of the WSO upon returning from a trip to Quebec, Canada. She was sent there to be of assistance to the local Fellowship in ways that will become obvious as you read on.

The word "l'envol" is a French word meaning "the take off" or "the lift off." So get strapped in for this one. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as we did putting it together. If you're one of those people with a love affair going with Narcotics Anonymous, I have no doubt that you will.

Ed.

"L'ENVOL"

Upon my return from Quebec, I was asked to write a synopsis of my experiences while visiting the Fellowship there. This would seem to be a relatively simple, straightforward request, but each time I sit down to write, I've been overwhelmed by so many feelings that it's just been impossible. I hope, in reading this, that you will feel some of the love and support I received from our members in Quebec.

When the office was first contacted during September, 1984, by B.T. from Quebec, I doubt that anyone could have foreseen the chain of events that would result. Between that time and January, 1985, we had several phone conversations, mainly about translation of N.A. literature to French Canadian and the cost involved in sending our literature into Canada. After several phone calls from Quebec, explaining the difference between our current translations and French

Canadian and requesting help with printing, distribution, etc., it was decided that personal contact was necessary to fully comprehend the differences and lend any help that might be needed.

That is where my story begins. B.T. and some other N.A. members met me at the airport in Montreal. Only two members were fully fluent in English, so they spent their next five days translating every meeting, every conversation for me. B.T. has been the member translating all literature received from the office here, and has been a primary source of info for N.A. members in Quebec. Prior to 1982, the only program of recovery available to addicts there was A.A. The French Canadians have very specific language for different types of drugs, and there has always been a definite separation between those addicts who smoked marijuana, those who used street drugs and those who used prescription medication. That concept resulted in the creation, by addicts in A.A., of several different Twelve Step Programs. A program called D.A. (Drugs Anonymous) was started who's first step stated, "We were powerless over drugs" (but meaning only street drugs), but whose members could drink. A local pharmacist started another program called P.D.A. (Prescription Drugs Anonymous) which dealt only with the use of prescription drugs and whose members also could drink.

Each of the people who attended a number of these specialized programs did so because they knew that something was missing for them in a program which stressed only one type of drug. They each told me that many addicts were continuing to use and die because they could not find what they needed. Most of the members with whom I talked were also receiving

some type of therapy, mainly because that was one of the means they had been using to try to find help.

B.T.'s sister had lived in Ontario for some time and found some N.A. literature, which she brought back to Quebec and gave to her brother, "just because she thought he might be interested." She had no idea what it would mean to him. He, and many others like him, realized they had found the answer. N.A., with it's message of recovery from the disease of addiction, beginning with complete abstinence, regardless of the drug or drugs the addict had been using, was what they had been searching for.

B.T. related a spiritual experience he had after finding N.A., during which he realized that for now his time would be spent in carrying the N.A. message of recovery. He began by talking to addicts who had been attending A.A., D.A. and P.D.A., showing them the translated literature and sharing his feelings. Most of the groups and members, including the pharmacist, experienced the same immediate attraction that B.T. had felt. Many of the groups decided to become a part of the N.A. Fellowship at that time.

B.T. made trips to the local police departments to inform them of what he was doing and to enlist their understanding, if not their support. At first they thought he would be able to help them by turning in the pushers he knew. Further explanation resulted in their understanding that such things are out of the question for an N.A. group, but they became willing to give N.A. meetings a chance.

So a few meetings were started, and they formed an Area Service Committee called "District 04." While I was there they held a public information forum which was well attended by local professionals as well as the founders of P.D.A. and D.A. The professionals I spoke to there indicated that they had been interested in N.A. as the answer for their addicted clients since their first exposure to our literature. They gave me addresses of about 50 local treatment centers to whom we could send informational packets.

After my presentation on the relationship of the World Service Office to the Fellowship, which included my job description and reason for being there, the people attending that P.I. session really had only one question. That was "what is the relationship between

N.A. and A.A. and why are they not the same?" This question, luckily for me, was answered beautifully by the recovering addicts themselves and the descriptions they gave of their experience while attending A.A., D.A. and P.D.A. and the different identification they found when finally able to attend meetings of Narcotics Anonymous.

The founders of P.D.A. and D.A. were primarily concerned about N.A.'s stability over the long haul. I found that their concern for the suffering addicts was great, and they took a good long look at us before they decided to commit. After many long discussions, and a meeting at which they and I were the main speakers, they both decided to become committed to N.A. and drop their involvement in the other programs. They are very respected locally, and their support will surely result in tremendous growth for N.A.

The people I met were all astounded that N.A. is stable and caring enough to send an office representative to visit them. Everywhere I went, they had special poems, dinners and speeches about the hope and caring I represented to them as a messenger of N.A.'s World Service Office. They felt that the experience took the mystery out of the program; that there had been confusion and doubt about the exact language of the literature they had received and concern over their possible misinterpretation of it, especially in meeting formats and the service structure.

I must say that I felt they had given me more than I could possibly have brought them. I haven't experienced the feelings of love and spiritual renewal I felt there since I had about seven months clean and realized I was in love with the program of Narcotics Anonymous.

Their concerns about misinterpreting the N.A. literature appeared to be completely unfounded. When I attended the meetings and the area service committee meeting I saw a loving God in action as never before. From the simple written words in our literature, they came up with interpretations that far exceeded what any human mind could have read, even between the lines. Their execution of what little information they had was more than what was written; it was exactly what had been intended, and much much more. Their

guidance could only have come from a Power greater than ourselves.

I have visited many different places and known different members and groups in various stages of their growth but never before experienced the total comprehension of this program emanating from members who have so little practical experience. There was no way I could convince them that they were giving me as much as I was giving them.

D.B
California

And from the other side of the story. . .

WITNESS TO A MIRACLE

I am a recovering addict from the French Canadian Fellowship. I would like to share a miracle with you. When I arrived in recovery, it happened to be in another Fellowship dealing with addicts. The first step used in that program went like this—we are "powerless over dope." I quit using dope. I kept drinking because it was all right in that program. For a long period of time it seems that I was not changing anything. I also had a problem with medication, and had to go to another Fellowship with that problem. When my drinking problem got worse, I had to go to still another Fellowship which dealt with alcoholism. This is how I spent my time, going from one Fellowship to another. After a few years I managed to stay clean. but I was going crazy. I had to go to three different Fellowships and I felt that no one understood me completely. When someone asked me to speak at a meeting they would also tell me to not mention alcohol, medication or dope, depending on which place I was speaking at.

There was really no service structure in any of these Fellowships besides the one for alcohol problems. It seems that I had three foster families but none of them accepted me entirely. Then I decided that if I were to feel at home somewhere I would have to start another Fellowship, or at least a new meeting where I

could identify. The other programs just couldn't solve my problem. I just couldn't understand how I could be powerless over a substance. I started to write about my disease and made a deep, searching inventory of what had happened in my life. I found out that addiction was really the heart of my disease. I was amazed by the fact that all the problems I had stemmed from the disease of addiction.

It is sometimes surprising to see how God works in our road to recovery. While I was sharing with my friends about my discovery of my addiction pattern, I received a letter from my sister with some literature from Narcotics Anonymous including the first part of the Basic Text. I was astonished to realize that there was a Fellowship like N.A. that had been around for over 30 years. I contacted the World Service Office and asked them if I could translate some of the literature into French. In a couple of months I had nine pamphlets translated, including the Group Starter Kit, and I decided to start a new meeting. During all these months I kept saying to my friends that I was going to start a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. Most of them told me that it wouldn't work, that I was wasting my time. My sponsor agreed with my decision. It was time for action. Everyone kept telling me that they wouldn't come to my meeting. On the 28th of October we had our first N.A. meeting, and incredibly there were 56 people present at the first meeting. Every one of them listened very carefully, waiting to see how it would turn out. My sponsor was the speaker at the first meeting, and he shared about his disease, how he recovered from medication, alcohol and dope problems. When everyone realized that they didn't have to hide their specific addictions, and that they were free to talk about their medication, alcohol and dope problems they started to understand the real meaning of addiction.

A month later three more meetings opened in our area. We had people living many miles from the meeting attending to find out more about the program. New meetings were beginning to start all over the Province with the promise of freedom and hope for addicts in search of recovery.

The World Service Office sent a representative to our country to help us organize our service structure

and to accelerate our literature process. We had 17 meetings at that time and we waited anxiously to receive printed literature from the WSO. In april we had 61 meetings, and new ones were springing up all over. Our region had its heart synchronized along with the worldwide Fellowship. We now have over 1,500 members, and our growth is increasing at a rapid pace. We were represented for the first time in 1985 at the World Service Conference.

The future of our Fellowship seems bright, and we pray that it stays this way. We had our first convention on Saturday May 11, 1985, in Shawinigan, Quebec, and it was a great success. Montreal will hold our first International Convention in October of this year.

We believe that this was a miracle, and we had the greatest feeling of being a part of it. By the grace of God, with the help and cooperation of the WSC and the WSO, we assure you that miracles make miracles happen.

B.T.
Quebec, Canada

Pain and Relief

The obsession with pain has always given me a weird perverted pleasure. It seemed that I was always hurting in one form or another during my active addiction. When I got cleaned up my obsession with pain was not removed immediately.

I have gone through periods of abusing myself by working my body past its limitations, where the pain was putting me in oblivion.

I also found myself feeding this obsession by not eating for several days or several weeks at a time. This kind of living brought me to the point of acting out with psychotic behavior and feeling very evil and suicidal. Over-working and under-eating made it impossible to grow spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically.

After some time in the Fellowship, I finally sought professional help. I was placed in a mental institution for 11 days, which gave me three meals a day and a break from work. At first I felt very ashamed and humiliated about being there. After I was released I could see that I had allowed self-centeredness and self-obsession to take control of me again. After a short period of time I was able to apply Steps Six and Seven to remove the obsession with pain, which gave me a freedom that I have never experienced during my recovery. This experience happened to me after being abstinent from drugs for over two years. Addiction runs much further than just using. In my case that meant seeking professional help in addition to N.A. Because I was involved in the steps of N.A., I was able to benefit from that help. I still attend meetings on a regular basis. I thank my Higher Power for the Narcotics Anonymous Program.

R.W.O.
Ohio

Discovering Spirituality

FOLLOWING DIRECTION

Before surrender came to me, I spent a lot of time and effort trying to work these steps on my own. The Eleventh Step was one I worked at diligently. Without the benefit of an unconditional surrender and the experience of Steps One through Ten to prepare me, though, my efforts seemed wasted. I usually would end up frustrated and confused, and I developed some strange and bizarre ideas of what a "conscious contact" was. Meditation was something I used to escape the problems and pressures that a life of total abstinence seemed to bring on.

After a long time, and a lot of pain, I surrendered unconditionally. I knew everything I'd tried to do on my own had failed; I knew I was an addict, that no human power could help me. I met a lot of people who had recovered through the Twelve Steps. I asked two of them to help me experience the steps. I had no other choices left. They shared their experiences with me and gave me direction. For the first time in four years, I began to experience manageability in my life. The problems and pressures vanished. I didn't understand what was happening; I only knew that when I followed direction, everything seemed to fall into place. When I got into the Eleventh Step, the direction I got was to take this step every morning. My sponsor showed me how to do it, and I tried it the way he showed me. So far, it is working fine. I still don't understand it, and I am still not sure what a "conscious contact" is, but it doesn't seem to matter. I take this step every day, and the results are a peace of mind, that I never knew before. Life is really good today.

Anonymous
Pennsylvania

GOD'S WILL NOT MINE

I am an addict and a grateful member of N.A. When I was out there using drugs, I was constantly on the run, going every which way and always getting into trouble wherever I would go. No matter where I was, trouble would always find me before I found it. I would always blame it on God whenever I got arrested or put in a treatment center. I thought God had it in for me, and that he was going to make me an example for other people to learn by. I had many people try and tell me that I should let God take control of my life, because I was not doing a very good job of it. There were a few people I knew who were constantly trying to get me to go to church and get saved. I would tell them not to waste their time on me because my mind was set on a one-way track to nowhere.

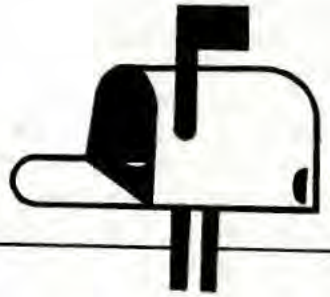
When I came to the program I heard Step Three read in meetings, and my mind was telling me to get out of there—that these people were nothing but religious freaks, and I didn't want anything to do with them. One of the people at the meeting could tell that when I heard the Third Step I got real nervous. After the meeting he came over and started talking to me. He told me how he felt when he first heard the Third Step read at meetings. He went through the same thing I was going through at this time. I could not believe he knew what I was going through, but I listened to him anyway because he was making sense to me. He told me that I did not have to worry about the Third Step right now, "Just keep coming to meetings and don't use, even if your ass falls off." A member of the Fellowship explained to me one evening after a meeting that God was loving and kind. I could understand that a lot easier, and I was able to make the decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood Him.

Today when I take the control back from God, things seem to get quite hectic in my life. I think that I can handle it, but in fact I cannot manage my own life at all; if I had been able to manage my will and life, I would not have started using drugs in the first place. Things are a lot better for me today as

long as I remember to turn my will and life over to the care of God as I understand him each morning as I get up.

Don P.
Oregon

Letters from Our Readers...



Dear N.A. Way,

Thanks again for the magazines. I have read them and passed them along. I always find them good reading, and if I keep an an open mind, it's a good way to carry the message that much further. Still, I cannot help but respond to the May issue, and an article on old timers. I feel that before things are printed, one should look deeper into what is written, towards how healthy it is. I don't consider myself an oldtimer, but I have been clean and free a good few years, and I'm very careful about how I voice my opinions of others, for I have always been a very hard and stubborn person. Before I found the Fellowship I had to lose everything many times and spend many years in the denial of the illness and hit rock bottom in the gutter after a lot of insane living that got me locked up and had people very concerned about my sanity.

As I said, I found the Fellowship, and I thank God for the person on that phone and the one who Twelve Stepped me. N.A. is my complete recovery. I would like to explain that I was very sick and very judgmental, and I too saw and heard members who had been around awhile not doing what they said at meetings. But who am I to take their inventory? Who, including myself, is perfect?

It's a fact from my own point of view that very few are willing to give service or be that unselfish and put the program first. For in the years I have been clean, I could never ever do enough for N.A. I have my life back today. I have my sanity, and yes, I'm still a bit crazy at times, but where an addict or anyone suffering needs help I listen. It's a matter of life or death, for it's a killer illness. And the newcomer is the most important person.

But please let us not forget the oldtimer who is still there who has seen a lot more than a lot of us, who in spite of it all is still willing to give service, and who can see another's sickness and ego ('cause they too had to work on their own). Thank God for those who are that humble, and then never complain. They just get on and do it.

I could go on and on. There have been very few times that get to me, even with the help of Step Three and the rest of the steps and traditions, but the reality is that I got a bit angry in response to that article (A Thought on Oldtimers). If it were not through them being there and still doing service, where would we be today? For they too are the backbone of our Fellowship and living proof that it too works—in time, with time, a day at a time. Thanks for opening me up, and I hope this too is printed. Thanks all on the N.A. Way.

In Fellowship
J.H.
England

Editor's note: In fairness to S.S. who wrote that original article, I think he had "tongue in cheek" a little more than you realized. I would read that article again. You may see implied many of the same points you made here more directly.

R.H.
Editor

Dear N.A. Way,

God Provides!

In recovery I have found that God provides what I need, when I need it, the way I need it. This has

nothing to do with what I want, when I want it, or how I want it.

I am 13 months into recovery, and many times when things seem hopeless, they have a habit of working out okay. Two weeks ago, I hadn't made the progress I felt I should have after a year clean. I finally did a tiny bit of footwork, and the courage and power to carry on in my recovery was provided. Afterwards I felt stronger for it. Since that night my life has been filled with a lot of growth, along with joy and pain. Years of garbage have been coming up in the form of uncontrolled tears. Joyous, grateful and painful tears. This was the first time I had cried for me in recovery. During these emotional times, I have relied heavily on God and my sponsor.

Once again I received what I needed. I didn't get what I wanted (the easier softer way), but it was what I needed, and now I know I can get over higher hurdles. Some of my faith has come from wanting very badly to believe. Some of my faith has come from watching other people change and grow miraculously. Some faith has simply been "fake it till you make it."

Many thanks to the people behind the N.A. Way. I greatly enjoy reading about the people in recovery everywhere. Keep up the good work.

G.E.
California

Dear N.A. Way,

I'm excited! Why? Well, in the words of one wise old prolific fellow, "Let me count the ways." Finally, after hanging around this here N.A. program for a couple of years now, I will have a year clean in just a few days. I've started working the steps and the relief, the stark difference in the way I feel, is unbelievable. I can remember thinking that the steps wouldn't work for me. A year! God willing, it looks as though I'll make it.

And, as if that was not enough, the program working in my life, I mean, yesterday we here at the California Institution for men at Chino, California received our first issue of the N.A. Way. After

opening and consuming it voraciously from cover to cover, I decided to sit down to write to tell you how inspiring it is for a person in prison to watch N.A. mature, the hope the Program's growth makes me feel. Some of us here at Chino and many others in other correctional facilities, no doubt, have had our hopeful fingers on the pulse of the rapidly expanding N.A. Program for some time now. And we are applauding the seeming inexhaustible efforts of you recovering addicts out there in spreading the message around the world. We do recover. Thank God!

So many recovering addicts will understand, I'm, sure, when I express the difficulties of working the program in jail. Unfortunately, there are not enough of us in these places (though, surely there are plenty of addicts here). We need all the encouragement from the outside we can get. And I thank you all for the N.A. Way.

N.A. How do I love thee? Let me count the Way.

B.H.
California Institution
for Men
Chino, California

Comin' Up

This space has been reserved for coming events anywhere in N.A. If you wish to list an event, send us a flier or note at least two months in advance. Include title, location, dates, contacts.

CALIFORNIA: July 4; San Fernando Valley 4th of July picnic; Reseda Park; 10 am til dusk

2) July 20; St. Mary's Church, Stockton; 10th anniv—"Hope without Dope" Wkshps, banquet, dance

3) Aug 2-4; San Diego RCNA I; Town & Country Hotel and Conv Ctr; 500 Hotel Circle N; write SDNACC, PO Box 4921, San Diego, CA 92104

4) Aug 16-18; Lyons Lake; High Country Campout; (209) Barbara 532-0882; Anita 586-1588

5) Oct 25-27; 7th Annl S Cal Conv; Hyatt Hotel LAX; Stu (805) 584-1135; Terry (213) 370-9875; Preston (714) 761-3222; Bridget (818) 762-2305

CONNECTICUT: Jan 3-5, 86; Connecticut's first convention; Marriott Hotel, Farmington; Mike or Al (203) 347-7856

ENGLAND: July 19-21; European Service Conference; London; (01) 351 6794

FLORIDA: July 4-7; FRCNA-4; Hyatt Regency of Miami, 400 S.E. 2nd Ave.; (305) Jay 255-0720; Andrea 758-2815; Julio 262-1362

INDIANA: Nov 1-3; Mid Coast RCNA; Atkinson Hotel, Indy; Box 2182, Indianapolis, IN 46206; (317) Terry 873-3295; Micky 873-6519;

IRELAND: Oct 25-27; Ireland's First Convention; Dublin Sport Hotel; Kilterman, Co Dublin, Tel: 893631; PO Box 1368, Sherriff St Dublin

IOWA: July 12-14; Iowa RCNA; Finn House and Knights of Columbus Hall, Algnoia; Dave 295-5028; Dan 295-5826; Shelley 295-7858;

KANSAS: July 4-7; 7th Anni 4th of July Campout; Camp Ada Walden, Salina; (913) Alan 827-3232; Jim 825-9510; Box 383, Salina, KS 76402

KENTUCKY: July 20-22; 5th Anni Abnormal Weenie Jam; Big Bone Lick, KY; days DeWayne (513) 825-8396; evenings Chuck (606) 525-0604

MICHIGAN: July 5-7; Central Great Lakes RCNA; Valley Plaza, Midland, MI; (517) Will 684-9168 or Greg 686-7622

MISSOURI: July 26-28; High on Life Picnic; Stockton Lake, MO; (417) Bob 781-6770, 623-1225; Blackie 623-6883, 623-2197

NEVADA: July 19-21; 3rd anni Stampede for Serenity (Campout); Stampede Reservoir, NV; Pre-registration a must!; (702) 322-4811

OREGON: Oct 11-13; 8th Anni Pacific NW Conv for NA; Valley River Inn, Eugene; (503) Martin or Susan 485-1397; Rick 746-7466; Doug 689-7711

OHIO: July 6; Ctrl OH Area Office fundraiser; Overbrook John Beltz retreat Ctr; Harlem Rd., Sunbury, OH (614) 252-1700

2) July 19-21; Camp-vention; Rainbow Lakes Campgrounds, West of Leetonia; Kathie & Jim 216-424-3701

PENNSYLVANIA: Oct 25-27; Tri-State RCNA III; Ptsbrgh, PA; Airport Hltn Inn; (412) Carmina 257-1657; Terry 441-1277; Yvonne (304) 232-5858;

TENNESSEE: Nov 27-Dec 1; Volunteer RCNA; Benchmark Hotel, 164 Union Ave, Memphis, TN; (901) Bill 525-4798; Gene 454-1313; Joseph 529-8779

WASHINGTON, DC: Aug 29-Sept 1; 15th Anni. **WORLD CONVENTION** of NA; Shorham Hotel; WCNA-15, Box 2232, Washington, DC 20013; travel agent contracted: 1-800-368-3527; register soon—late fee after 7-31

WISCONSIN: Oct 11-13; 2nd anni Wisc Conv; Wausau Holiday Inn; Box 502, Wasuau 54401; (715) Heidi 845-5545; Bob 675-6673; Marilyn 675-2563

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THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. ***Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.***

2. ***For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.***

3. ***The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.***

4. ***Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.***

5. ***Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.***

6. ***An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.***

7. ***Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.***

8. ***Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.***

9. ***N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.***

10. ***Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.***

11. ***Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.***

12. ***Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.***

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